

If there is any poetry to be culled from all the pain, one slim volume offers a tribute to the monuments that were lost and the potential futures that were smothered in their debris.

A modest artists' book in the best sense of the term, *The B-Thing* (Walther König, \$35), by the Austrian artists' collective Gelatin, is like a resurrected ghost of the World Trade Center, not in all its capitalist glory, but more profoundly in its elusive symbology of desire: authority and its trespasses. This just-published documentation of a conceptually clever, visually fantastical, and dangerously illegal performance action undertaken by Gelatin in 2000, reveals to an unsuspecting public just what it was these artists did in the course of their official studio residence at the WTC. Understandably, the buildings have taken on an aura of "sacred ground" for many, and the idea that a bunch of foreign artists did this work where so many thousands died may cause some misplaced resentment in those already suspicious of contemporary art's intentions. What Gelatin did—remove the glass from a ninety-first-floor window, suspend a balcony out the window, and stand upon it for ten minutes—was a violation of everything that most imposing of corporate office spaces literally stood for. The piece was not about the transgression itself, however. It was a dream, as personal a dream as any *New Yorker* has ever entertained. The artists' statement included herein explains the project with a directness

and honesty that is typical of Gelatin's work: "The project balcony has been developed from a very strong desire to step outside a window on 91st floor. The balcony is about the feeling you have when you stand on it and about the pleasure you absorb, when being totally dependent on a

structure and atmosphere you have created yourself." On September 11, we collectively lost control over the structure and atmosphere of our lives. Perhaps we all need to step outside that window and be suspended by something—call it art or faith—for just a moment. I can say for certain that contemplating *The B-Thing* has been one of the healthiest, happiest things I've done recently. □

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